



## **EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION PROGRAM GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATORS**

The Commonwealth's Employee Suggestion Program (ESP) encourages employees to make suggestions that will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of state government and rewards employees whose ideas are adopted. The ESP is administered by the Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) in cooperation with participating agencies. Employees from all executive branch agencies and other participating agencies of the state are eligible to submit suggestions through ESP.

Suggestions that identify specific problems and propose workable solutions can bring increased productivity, reduced costs, improved and safer working conditions, conservation of resources, and better public services.

This guide contains some important facts to know and hints to use when preparing your suggestion evaluation. For additional information about ESP, see the ESP Procedures Manual and Policy 1.21, Employee Suggestion Program, in the Policy section of the DHRM Web site, <http://www.dhrm.virginia.gov/>

### **THE ROLE OF AN EVALUATOR**

You should know enough about the suggestion subject to be able to determine the following:

- any benefits expected to come from using the suggestion,
- feasibility of implementing the suggestion,
- extent of its application (one agency? statewide?),
- originality of the idea, and
- with input from fiscal staff, an estimate of costs and savings if implemented.

As an expert in the subject matter, you may be part of the current process that the suggestion would affect. Remember that even long-standing procedures may need to be changed. In some cases, regulations and policies may be alterable, if the benefits of alteration warrant doing so. Approach suggestions with a positive attitude and an open mind.

If you are not qualified to evaluate the suggestion, please return it to your Agency ESP Coordinator as soon as possible. Because suggestions move through the process anonymously, your own suggestion could come to you for review. If this happens, you must return it to your Agency ESP Coordinator so that another evaluator can assess your idea.

## **ELIGIBILITY FOR ADOPTION AND AWARD**

Suggestions are eligible for consideration when implementing them causes agency activity that results in savings (including cost avoidance) or increased revenue, improved productivity, better service, or safer operations. To be eligible for an award, a suggestion must result in a new or modified activity that is directly related to the suggestion and that is implemented by one or more agencies. The agency(s) must benefit in one or more of the ways described below.

Generally, suggestions must meet these criteria:

- Identify problems or areas where productivity, efficiency, effectiveness, or safety can be improved.
- Propose a reasonable method to implement the suggestion.
- Show expected benefits in one or more categories like these:
  - improve methods, accounting practices, housekeeping, quality of products, office procedures, protection of property, or working conditions;
  - reduce the cost of materials or services, waste, or maintenance;
  - eliminate spoilage, duplication, breakage, wasted effort, or bottlenecks;
  - increase service delivery, production of materials, or the amount of work produced generally;
  - increase state revenue;
  - combine operations, methods, procedures, or forms;

- save time, material, equipment or natural resources;
- invent equipment, methods of operation, or products; or
- develop methods to decrease risk or danger and improve safety in a work activity or procedure.

Suggestions are NOT eligible for award consideration when they:

- concern a change in employee salary or position title;
- do not provide complete or clear information;
- do not include a solution or plan for improvement;
- involve routine requests for maintenance or supplies and services that should be processed through established channels;
- result from assigned or contracted audits, studies, surveys, reviews or research;
- concern proposals that management can document are already under active consideration;
- duplicate another suggestion which is still under review, or for which an award previously has been granted;
- propose following procedures already either permitted or required that are not being followed.

## **TWO KINDS OF SUGGESTIONS**

The potential benefits of a suggestion may be tangible and quantifiable or intangible and difficult or impossible to quantify. These two types of suggestions are handled slightly differently during the evaluation process.

For suggestions with expected tangible benefits, the cost avoidance or increased revenue must be estimated. Ask your agency fiscal officer to help by calculating the estimated benefit with you. (There is a page on the evaluation form for this calculation.) These estimates are used in projecting the value of implementing the suggestion. If the suggestion is adopted, any cash award to the suggester will be based on actual first-year implementation data.

If the suggestion would provide a benefit that is intangible or hard to quantify, complete the section of the evaluation form which analyzes that benefit and recommend an amount of paid leave to be awarded to the suggester.

Normally, the suggester receives a certificate along with the cash or paid leave award for an adopted suggestion. However, as the evaluator, you may recommend giving only a certificate (no cash or paid leave) for a good idea that does not merit those additional awards.

## **A SUMMARY OF EVALUATION PROCEDURES**

Please evaluate the suggestion as carefully as you would like someone to evaluate a suggestion submitted by you.

- Locate the data or information you will need. Contact DHRM if you need clarification or additional information; they will contact the suggester and obtain further information or, if suitable, arrange for contact with you.
- Discuss the idea with other staff, if necessary. Because of confidentiality concerns, you should assess the value of their input before asking others.
- If the suggestion cannot be adopted as a whole, consider whether it may be adopted in part or with modifications.
- Complete the evaluation form and make your recommendation.
  - When recommending adoption and a cash award, estimate net first-year savings and complete computations on the relevant section of the evaluation form.
  - Have an agency budget official review or provide input and sign the evaluation if financial information is needed.
  - Ask your supervisor or division director to review and sign the evaluation.
  - Return completed evaluation to the Agency ESP Coordinator within 45 days of receiving it.
  - If you need more time, notify your Agency ESP Coordinator.

**When not recommending adoption:**

- Give specific reasons for declining the suggestion.
- Be certain the reasons for not recommending adoption are based on good business principles and can be clearly understood.
- When the idea is already being considered by agency management, document and give dates of consideration, if possible.
- Complete the form carefully and thoroughly. If the suggester appeals, the form may be seen by him or her as well as other officials in the appeals process.

Please do not complete either the cash or non-cash awards section of the form unless you are recommending adoption of the suggestion.

**PLEASE REMEMBER THAT SUGGESTERS HAVE A RIGHT TO:**

- a timely evaluation;
- courteous treatment;
- a fair and thorough appraisal;
- confidentiality during the process for all suggestions and continuing confidentiality for suggestions not adopted;
- information about why their suggestions are not adopted or implemented; and
- an appropriate award.

**FINAL CHECKLIST**

- Give specific reasons for your decision to adopt or decline.
- Include a cost justification of your decision.
- Review your draft and ask:

- Is it complete and clear?
- Is it possible to implement this idea in another department, or to implement part of it?
- If I were the suggester, would I be satisfied with this evaluation?
- Return the evaluation promptly to your Agency ESP Coordinator.

## **THANK YOU**

Thank you for performing the role of evaluator in the Employee Suggestion Program. Through ESP, you have made an important contribution that could result in better state government.